

# URBAN AGRICULTURE BACKGROUND

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR THE LANGLEY URBAN AGRICULTURE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

### WHAT IS URBAN AGRICULTURE?

Urban agriculture (UA) is not a new concept, and currently many examples of commercial and non-commercial food production can be found in cities around the world. UA is defined as the practice of cultivating, processing, and distributing food in or around a village, town, or city that can involve animal husbandry, aquaculture, agroforestry, beekeeping, and horticulture.

The primary outcome of UA is food production, but many projects also provide multi-functional benefits that align with broader social and ecological sustainability goals. The potential functions of UA projects are outlined in Table 1.



[Fresh Roots School Farm, Vancouver BC](#)

Fresh Roots operates market gardens on school yard properties in Vancouver. These projects increase access to local food, provide education for young people and summer employment for students.



[Prinzessinnengärten, Berlin GER](#)

This urban garden occupies a vacant lot in central Berlin which has contributed to urban greening, provided new space for community connection and opportunities for education about food production and ecology.

TABLE 1: FUNCTIONS OF URBAN AGRICULTURE

Function	Description
Food Production	UA projects are managed to produce food as a primary outcome including; fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, herbs, medicinal plants, meat and/or dairy products.
Education	Located close to dense populations UA projects provide opportunities to learn about agriculture, food, ecology, traditional food ways and sustainability.
Cultural Heritage	UA projects can provide access to ethnically diverse foods, be a tool for education about cultural diversity or express the agricultural and food history of a place and its people.
Biodiversity Enhancement	UA projects provide wildlife habitat and increase both native and agricultural biodiversity.
Community Development	UA projects can support and promote socialization and capacity building in communities by giving residents the opportunity to work collaboratively and build social capital.
Urban Greening & Recreation	UA projects often turn unused or poorly maintained urban land into naturalized and aesthetically pleasing landscapes where gardening and other physical activities are publicly accessible.
Waste Management	UA projects can provide space where organic waste can be composted and used as a fertility resource for growing food.
Health & Well-Being	UA projects bring additional green spaces to urban environments and increase the accessibility to fresh, locally produced food.
Economic Development	UA projects can create employment opportunities in production and educational activities as well as agricultural job training options. Can also nurture small farm businesses through incubator design.
Environmental Conservation	Focused on small scale, ecologically oriented agriculture UA projects can be well integrated with efforts to conserve or rehabilitate the natural environment.
Rainwater Management	UA projects create opportunities for rain-water infiltration reducing run-off in urban landscapes.

## URBAN AGRICULTURE AMENITIES

Urban agriculture projects are as diverse as the communities they serve and can be characterized by the different physical and programmatic elements, or amenities.

Other amenities, including parking, walking trails and signage are often also integrated to improve user experience, education and recreation outcomes. Some common UA amenities are described in Table 2.



### 21 Acres, Woodinville WA

This community farm is operated by a non-profit group and features a children’s garden, apiary, local food market, incubator kitchen as well as production space for vegetables and fruits.



### Haliburton Organic Farming Society, Victoria BC

This site hosts 7 different farming businesses, including a native plant nursery. Businesses share resources and make collective decisions about how to manage the land. The site also features a wetland and several kilometers of trails.

### SoleFood Farm, Vancouver BC

This urban farm produces food in containers on top of concrete for distribution in the local community. They provide meaningful employment to residents of the Downtown East Side neighbourhood where the farms are located, many of whom face barriers to traditional employment

TABLE 2: URBAN AGRICULTURE AMENITIES

Amenity	Description
Community Farm	A farm where production, processing, distribution of food takes place and direct connections with communities are cultivated.
Community Orchard	A collection of fruit and/or nut trees planted in a public space where there is shared access to the open space and the food produced.
Incubator Farm	Small farm plots accessible to new farmers to practice agricultural skills, gain experience and launch their farming businesses.
Training Farm	Working farms that also offer some kind of formalized training (course or program) to train people for careers in agricultural.
School Garden	Spaces designed and managed to connect directly to student learning objectives, often located on or adjacent to school properties.
Outdoor Classroom	Dedicated outdoor space for learning and educational programming.
Accessibility Garden	Providing gardening opportunities for people with physical disabilities or mobility issues.
Children’s Garden	Growing space designed for children with a focus on ecological systems and/or the link to food production.
Community Garden	A piece of land divided into plots that is gardened collectively producing food for personal use or for the community.
Indigenous Garden	Space for Indigenous communities to express cultural identity and educate non-indigenous people about traditional food systems.
Pollinator Garden	Gardens designed to increase habitat for other wild pollinators (i.e. bees, butterflies).
Livestock	In urban farming context livestock can include; chickens, honey bees, goats, sheep, pigs or fish.
Ecological/Habitat Areas	Integrated into farming landscapes these areas increase wild biodiversity and provide educational opportunities about the links between ecology and food production.



## URBAN AGRICULTURE IN HYDRO RIGHT-OF-WAYS

Agriculture is considered a compatible use in hydro right-of-way (ROW) areas in urban and rural settings with cropping and livestock grazing both practiced.

Hydro ROW areas present specific opportunities for UA, as parcels of land where the potential for future development is limited and other uses are restricted.

When health and safety concerns are properly addressed through planning and design, UA projects in hydro ROW areas have the potential to contribute to a variety of positive outcomes. There are however restrictions on agricultural activities and infrastructure in these areas which can make it difficult to farm successfully, especially in an urban setting.

### RESTRICTIONS IN HYDRO RIGHT-OF-WAYS

All secondary uses in hydro ROW areas are subject to restrictions that aim to protect public safety and maintain function of utility equipment. BC Hydro outlines site infrastructure and activities that may be restricted in ROW areas, including:

- Permanent structures
- Temporary structures over 3m
- Mature vegetation over 3m
- Metallic materials (including fencing and lighting)
- Mechanical irrigation
- Commercial parking lots
- Any interference with utility work and equipment

More information about hydro ROW safety and a full list of possible restrictions can be found in the [BC Hydro Right-of-Way Compatibility Guidelines](#).



[Stanford Avalon Community Garden, Los Angeles CA](#)

This community garden was established on vacant land under high voltage power lines. The garden serves many low income and marginalized residents providing space for growing food and for connecting with community.



[Loutet Farm, North Vancouver BC](#)

This farm is an initiative of a non-profit group called the Edible Garden Project. The site facilitates production, education and community connection by hosting regular workbees, education days and community meals.



[Lafayette Greens, Detroit MI](#)

This public plaza has been transformed into an urban agriculture amenity through the use of raised garden beds and public art.



[Brooksdale Community Farm, Surrey BC](#)

This farm features 2 acres of market garden producing for a Community Shared Agriculture program. The farm is also part of a bigger site dedicated to ecological restoration and environmental education.

### PROJECT PARTNERS

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